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We claim:-

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1. A methanol reforming catalyst containing passivated copper and zinc oxide and/or alumina, which can be prepared by

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(1) precipitating or spray-drying a mixture of catalyst precursor components dissolved or suspended in a diluent in order to form a solid catalyst precursor in the form of powder or granules,

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(2) calcining and reducing the solid catalyst precursor obtained in stage (1),

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(3) passivating the reduced catalyst precursor obtained in stage (2) and

(4) shaping the passivated catalyst precursor obtained in stage (3) to form the catalyst.

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2. A catalyst as claimed in claim 1, wherein the shaping in stage (4) leads to layers, extrudates, monoliths, strands, pellets, tablets or chips.

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3. A catalyst as claimed in claim 1, wherein the calcination and reduction are carried out in succession in stage (2), it being possible for the calcined catalyst precursor to be comminuted in between.

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4. A catalyst as claimed in claim 1, wherein the catalyst contains alumina in addition to passivated copper and zinc oxide, and solutions of

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5 5. A catalyst as claimed in claim 4, wherein stages
(1) and (2) are carried out as follows:

10 (a) precipitation of a solution of zinc and
 aluminum salts, the Zn : Al atomic ratio
 being from 3 : 1 to 1 : 3, with an alkali
 metal carbonate or hydroxide solution at a pH
 of from 5 to 12 and a temperature of from 20
 to 100°C,

15 (b) isolation and washing of the precipitate to
 remove alkali metal ions,

 (c) drying of the precipitate,

20 (d) calcination of the precipitate at from 250 to
 800°C to give a mixed oxide,

 (e) dispersing of the mixed oxide in an acidic
 solution of copper and zinc salts, the Cu:Zn
25 atomic ratio in the solution being from 1 : 5
 to 20 : 1,

 (f) precipitation of the dispersion with an
 alkali metal carbonate or hydroxide solution
30 at a pH of from 6 to 9 and a temperature of
 from 20 to 100°C,

 (g) performance of steps (b) to (d),

35 (h) reduction of the catalyst precursor obtained
 in stage (g) with a gas containing free
 hydrogen,

it being possible for the solutions in steps (a)

and/or (e) additionally to contain salts or oxides of one or more elements of the platinum metals, of groups 4, 5 and 11 and of the lanthanides of the Periodic Table of the Elements or for the salts or oxides to be applied to the mixed oxides.

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6. A process for the preparation of a catalyst as claimed in claim 1, wherein said stages are carried out.

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7. A process for steam-reforming methanol by reacting methanol and water over a catalyst, as defined in claim 1, at from 0.5 to 10 bar and from 150 to 450°C.

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8. A process for reducing the volume shrinkage and for increasing the mechanical hardness during operation of methanol reforming catalysts, wherein the methanol reforming catalyst is prepared by a process as claimed in claim 6.

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